

BACKGROUND

SOLEC 2004 SUCCESS STORY

The Junction Creek Stewardship Committee Sudbury, Ontario

Junction Creek is part of the Spanish River Watershed in the Great Lakes Basin. The creek is approximately 20 km long and flows through the heart of Sudbury. As a result, Junction Creek is influenced not only by urban discharges, but the legacy of more than 100 years of mining in the Sudbury area.

The Spanish River Harbour, originally designated one of 43 Areas of Concern on the Great Lakes, is now considered to be an Area in Recovery. The recovery is attributed, in part, to the environmental initiatives the mining industries in Sudbury have implemented. Junction Creek would be at the forefront of many of these improvements, as Nolins Creek, Garson Creek and Copper Cliff Creek all have headwaters at mine sites and are tributaries of Junction Creek.

Starting in the early 1900s, forestry and mining were the primary industries in the Sudbury area. Industry practices at the time devastated the landscape, essentially removing all the trees from the area. The result was an increase in soil erosion as well as inputs of metals and other contaminants from atmospheric fallout into Junction Creek and other area watersheds. Up until the 1960s, raw sewage from the city was discharged directly into the creek. The cumulative impacts of these activities left large sections of the creek essentially dead.

In response to the environmental effects that were degrading the watershed, the Junction Creek Stewardship Committee was formed in 1999. It arose out of a number of public forums, each attended by more than 150 citizens. The Junction Creek Stewardship Committee is an independent body, comprised of citizens interested in furthering the above-mentioned goals. Members of the committee come from a variety of backgrounds and include individuals from local, regional and provincial government agencies such as the Vegetation Enhancement Technical Advisory Committee (VETAC), the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ontario Ministry of the Environment. Members also come from university, colleges, businesses, industries and community groups. In addition, there are a number of interested and enthusiastic people on the committee who are not affiliated with any particular group. The mining company INCO is a primary sponsor of the Junction Creek Stewardship Committee.

The committee meets monthly to co-ordinate citizen participation in environmental restoration activities centred on Junction Creek, in an effort to re-green adjacent lands, reduce soil erosion, re-engineer the creek bed and banks, and improve water quality. The ultimate goal is to create a healthy ribbon of blue and green through the City of Greater Sudbury. Since its inception, the Junction Creek Stewardship Committee has conducted many activities to restore the creek and reconnect it to the community.

Between 1999 and 2004, approximately 35,000 kg of garbage was removed from the creek and its banks. Efforts are being continually made to help maintain the creek in a garbage-free state. The group has also co-ordinated citizen participation in the planting of thousands of trees along the creek. Water quality had improved enough that in 2000 and 2001, with the assistance of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, 6,000 brook trout were reintroduced into the upper reaches of the creek. Research and monitoring are ongoing to determine the success of this release, but indications thus far show that the brook trout are surviving once again in Junction Creek.

The Junction Creek Stewardship Committee works to increase public awareness, not only of its namesake, but of ways to make daily activities more environmentally friendly. This includes giving slide presentations and guided field trips for school groups, promoting a toxic-free home and checking your car for oil leaks.

The Junction Creek Stewardship Committee has been successful in altering the perception a community has of its local watershed. Once considered to be a blight on the landscape, Junction Creek is becoming a treasured community resource. The group is working on initiatives for further revegetation of the Junction Creek Watershed, as well as linking with even more members of the community and area industry.

-30-

For further information, please contact:

Harvey Shear
Regional Science Advisor
Environment Canada, Ontario Region
Tel: (416) 739-4704
E-mail: harvey.shear@ec.gc.ca

(Également offert en français)